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SUBJECT: UN OVERSIGHT: OIOS REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT OF SPECIAL
POLITICAL MISSIONS

REF: A/61/357

¶1. SUMMARY: The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), in response to General Assembly resolution 60/255, conducted an audit of the management of special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Special political missions are involved in the prevention and control and resolution of conflicts, including post-conflict peacebuilding. The findings of the review (outlined in report A/61/357) cited unclear mandates and resulting duplication between DPA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), as well as a need to improve budgetary processes, as key issues. The review concluded with 15 recommendations for the management of special political missions. The recommendations centered on clarification of the jurisdictions of DPA and DPKO; establishment of better coordination between DPA and DPKO through interdepartmental working groups and standard operating procedures; and reform of the budgetary process. OIOS also recommended the delineation of the specific roles of DPA and the Peacebuilding Support Office. DPA and DPKO have accepted these recommendations and have started to implement them. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not comment on those recommendations that impact that office. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Based on comments made by ACABQ (A/60/7/Add.37), the General Assembly felt that a review of DPA's management of special political missions would be helpful. The review was necessitated by the continuing expansion of complex special political missions, as well as the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office. Due to the importance of policy, oversight and managerial guidance in the success of special political missions, effective coordination and oversight between UN departments is essential. The main objectives of the OIOS audit were to (a) assess DPA's ability to guide and manage special political missions; (b) review the appropriateness of related policies and procedures; and (c) determine the sufficiency of internal controls.

¶3. The review found that the Department's ability to backstop missions and efficiently recruit qualified personnel are both improving. However, the rapid expansion (in size and number) of special political missions has complicated processes and management, and effectiveness requires clearer roles and coordination among stakeholders.

¶4. OIOS found that risk of duplication occurs in special political missions because DPKO and DPA have few established coordination procedures and sometimes overlapping mandates. The departments were intended to have different roles and responsibilities with regard to political and peacekeeping operations - DPKO is the operational arm for peacekeeping missions, whereas DPA addresses post-conflict peacebuilding and preventative diplomacy. However, there are increasingly overlapping areas of activity, particularly due to the increase of complex missions. Additionally, frequent collaboration is required because DPA lacks the logistical

support capacity required for some of its field activities. The Secretary-General has instituted a "lead department policy" to establish a commanding department for each mission, but the policy lacks clear criteria and transparency with regard to decision making.

¶15. Review of the existing mandates for each department is also essential in order to provide greater clarity. The DPA mandate needs to be restructured to account for overlap with DPKO and for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, all of which have related functions.

¶16. There is also a need to clarify budgetary processes, as funding for all special political missions is included in DPA's budget section, although DPA is not the lead department for all of these missions. The ACABQ has also requested a logical categorization of the work programs in budget submissions. The report noted a lack of documented procedures and evidence for justifying expenses and resources, as well as the absence of annual performance reports and variance analysis of mission budgets to improve efficiency and target weak areas. The efficient use of resources is hampered by inadequate control and oversight of budgets. OIOS determined that there is a need for better performance indicators and policies or procedures for improving efficiency and communication. Management must develop standard operating procedures for communication between headquarters and missions, as well as for determining and applying lessons learned. Additionally, exit strategies must be developed for special political missions.

¶17. OIOS issued 15 recommendations that covered four broad areas:

- Updating mandates to reflect each department's

responsibility for directing special political missions, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, and institution of the lead department policy.

- Establishment of better coordination between DPA and DPKO through the clarification of the Secretary-General's lead department policy, working-level methodologies and the formation of interdepartmental working groups to create coordination procedures.

- Reform of the budgetary process, including the creation of an oversight mechanism in the form of an operational agreement between DPA and DPKO, the formation of a working group to revise and oversee the budget, and enhancement of budgetary controls through performance reports of expenditures in order to better address accountability for budget resources of field missions.

- Improvement of management and communication within DPA by strengthening standard operating procedures and creation of performance indicators.

¶18. DPA and DPKO have accepted these recommendations and have started to implement them. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General did not comment on those recommendations

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that impact that office.

¶19. COMMENT: The review raises a number of important issues regarding the management of special political missions and will be discussed by the Fifth Committee at the same time that the Committee considers the 2007 budgets for special political missions. USUN hopes that, in implementing the OIOS recommendations, Member States will be provided with more useful information for budgetary decisions in the future and that the Secretariat will be in a position to more efficiently manage special political missions. END COMMENT.

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